From: KLAS99C@prodigy.com (Jack Johansson)

The following piece was broadcast on KLAS Television (CBS-Las Vegas) on 10/11/95, in the
6:30 newscast. It was reported by investigative reporter George Knapp. (In this form you do not
get to enjoy some great old film of the SR-71, A12 flying over the Nevada Desert, and taking off
from Area 51.

ROADRUNNERS

DATE=10-11-95

THE SECRETS OF NEVADA'S AREA- 51 MILITARY BASE... MAY BE KNOWN ACCORDING TO SOME OF THE FIRST MEN WHO WORKED THERE. A GROUP OF TEST PILOTS AND CREW MEMBERS, KNOWN AS THE ROAD- RUNNERS, ARE IN TOWN THIS WEEK.

THE ROADRUNNERS TALK ABOUT THEIR PLANES... BUT THE PLACES WHERE THEY FLEW. GEORGE KNAPP TELLS US THEIR STORY... IN THIS I-TEAM REPORT.

george: FROM THE INNOCUOUS SIGN IN THE HOTEL LOBBY, A PASSERBY MIGHT THINK THE ROADRUNNERS ARE JUST ANOTHER SOCIAL GROUP, LIKE ELKS OR MASONS, HERE TO HAVE A GOOD TIME. BUT A QUICK LOOK AT THE PHOTO DISPLAY IN THEIR HOSPITALITY SUITE HINTS THERE'S MORE TO THESE GUYS THAN MEETS THE EYE... MOST OF THE ROADRUNNERS ARE EITHER TEST PILOTS OR SUPPORT STAFF WHO WORKED ON TOP SECRET AIRCRAFT PROGRAMS, MANY OF WHICH WERE BASED AT NEVADA'S INFAMOUS GROOM LAKE FACILITY.

Jim Eastham/Test Pilot: At the time, I couldnt even tell my wife... george: EASTHAM IS THE
THIRD MAN IN THE WORLD TO FLY THE A-12, FIRST OF THE FAMILY OF AIRCRAFT KNOWN AS THE BLACKBIRDS, THE FASTEST PLANES IN HUMAN HISTORY. THEY WERE BUILT IN THE EARLY 60'S AS REPLACEMENTS FOR THE CIA'S U-2 SPY PLANES, WHICH WERE ALREADY FLYING OUT OF AREA 51 AND OTHER BASES.

Jim Goodall/Aviation Writer: They call it the Test site or the ranch, theycant say it exists officially.

george: GOODALL HAS BECOME AN UNOFFICIAL MEMBER OF THE ROADRUNNERS AND HAS GLEANED PREVIOUSLY UNTOLD STORIES ABOUT AMERICA'S MOST SECRET PROJECTS. GROOM LAKE LOCATION WAS CHOSEN AS A BASE FOR SPY PLANES PRECISLY BECAUSE IT WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. THIS IS EARLY FOOTAGE OF A U-2 TAKING OFF FROM GROOM LAKE, A MOST INHOSPITABLE PLACE...

Jim Goodall: it was remote in the middle of nowhere...they had 4 inch rocks blowing across the
lake...they hunted gophers, rocks, drank a lot, but got the job done.

Jim Gilliland/Test Pilot: I knew it was high and fast and great. super.

george:GILLILAND IS THE FIRST MAN TO EVER FLY WHATS REGARED AS THE WORLD'S GREATEST PLANE---THE SR 71 BLACKBIRD, WHICH COULD COVER 35 MILES PER SECOND, 300 FEET PER SECOND FASTER THAN A BULLET FROM A 30-06. AT SUCH SPEEDS AND ALTITUDES, THE METALLIC SKIN OF THE SR 71 HEATS UP TO NEARLY 1100 DEGREES.

Jim Gilliland: a self cleaning oven is about 425, a soldering iron is 800. that's the kind of temperatures...sustained.

george:MANY OF THEIR FELLOW PILOTS DIED IN THE EARLY TESTS. MANY MORE DIED IN OPERATIONAL MISSIONS OVER HOSTILE NATIONS, BUT NO ENEMY EVERY SHOT DOWN A BLACKBIRD, ALTHOUGH MANY TRIED.

Jim Gilliland: You know why they call them missiles. they miss. george: THE HEROISM OF TEST PILOTS WAS IMORTALIZED IN THE BOOK AND FILM, THE RIGHT STUFF, BUT DONT TRY APPLYING ANY OF THAT IMAGERY TO THE ROADRUNNERS.... IT'S HOLLYWOOD HOOPLA TO THEM. THEY TESTED THESE DANGEROUS PLANES BEFORE MILITARY PILOTS LIKE CHUCK YEAGER EVER CLIMBED INTO THE COCKPITS. AND THEY KEPT THEIR MOUTHS SHUT. 30 YEARS LATER, THEY'LL TALK ABOUT THEIR PLANES, BUT THEY STILL WONT SAY MUCH ABOUT THE BASE IN THE DESERT.

george:Did you fly it in Nevada? Jim:well, i flew it anywhere the blackbird was flown. that's diplomatic.. ha ha.))

george:IN AN AGE OF MEDIA SATURATION, SECRETS CAN STILL BE KEPT, THE ROADRUNNERS SAY, AND SOME OF THE BEST SECRETS ARE RIGHT HERE IN NEVADA.

Jim Goodall: There are things out there that are 30 years ahead of today, things you may not hear about for 50 years...things you may never hear about, cant conveive of.

george:JIM GOODALL, WHO HAS WRITTEN A BOOK ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE SR-71, THINKS THE ROADRUNNERS SHOULD BE HONORED AS GENUINE AMERICAN HEROES, LIKE THE ASTRONAUTS, AND IT'S HARD TO ARGUE WITH THAT. HOWEVER, IT'S IDDIFULT TO DO BECAUSE SO MUCH OF WHAT THEY DID REMAINS CLASSIFIED DECADES LATER.